

INNOVATION:

A P O E M.

—Audendum—nunc ipsa vocat res. VIRG.

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INNOVATION.

'T^{IS} March! How warm this cottage-garden spreads
Full to the Southern clime its little beds!
Here, time-worn pales the searching North oppose;
There, intertwisted thorns the entrance close:
While gooseberries renown'd for luscious juice,
Mix'd with the fragrant briar, those for use
Cultured, for pleasure this, combine their screen,
And tip the lengthening bud with early green.
Lo, half conceal'd from each incurious view
By wither'd sage and ever verdant rue,
Yon snow-drops, heralds of the opening year,
Through melting drifts in kindred vesture peer.
Their modest heads the florets bend to earth,
And seem to shun the beams that gave them birth.
While, boldly venturing from the guardian hedge,
The crocus, posted on the border's edge,

Expands her bosom to the noon-tide rays,
 And all her golden cups return the blaze.
 Hark ! round yon hive the busy murmur rings.
 What crowds in frolic circles ply their wings,
 Reviving funs in glad commotion hail,
 And drink the freshness of the vernal gale !
 While these in sports their vacant raptures pour,
 Those wiser haunt the new-discover'd flower ;
 Each fragrant cell explore, each nectar'd fold,
 Glean the new wax, and load their thighs with gold.
 Propt on his spade behold the owner stand,
 And watch, absorb'd in thought, the industrious band :
 While Hope, exulting many a month before,
 Computes the weight of their autumnal store.

With calmer tide when sanguine passions roll,
 And Peace and Musing harmonise the soul,
 What charms hath simple Nature ! O'er the heart
 A pensive pleasure steals : the toys of Art—
 “ Nature ! ” exclaims a Critic, while surprise
 Wrinkles his brow, dilates his angry eyes ;
 “ What mighty charms can barren Nature shew ?
 “ Nature, grown old five thousand years ago :

“ Nay,

- " Nay, thrice five thousand—thanks to modern lore,
 " That lying Hebrew can delude no more—
 " The charms of simple Nature! Grant them true:
 " With simple Nature what hast thou to do?
 " Of yore, as when the infant's drawling tongue
 " Forms its vile cadence to the Nurse's song;
 " Dandled in Nature's arms, poetic brains
 " Tun'd to her chords their monotonic strains.
 " And, darkling still, from beams of modern day
 " Yon rhymers turn; and Cowper leads the way.
 " Shall bards then trace, in Freedom's reign the plan
 " By poets hackney'd since the world began;
 " Greet with obedient faith each pedant rule
 " Enforced in Homer's antiquated school;
 " Pace the dull track of old by Virgil trod,
 " And still, like children, crouch to Nature's rod?
 " Lo, Innovation, every wing unfurl'd,
 " Sails all-transforming o'er the awaken'd world;
 " Redeems from error's grasp the free-born mind,
 " Reforms, illumines, blesses all mankind;
 " To heights unknown exalts each liberal art;
 " Tears up inveterate systems from the heart;

" Bids king and noble to the mob return ;
 " Views in one pile crowns, scepters, titles, burn ;
 " Her dungeon'd prey bids Tyranny release ;
 " Cries, ' War to thrones, but to the cottage peace ;'
 " Rains Trees of Liberty on realms of slaves,
 " And high in air ten thousand scions waves :
 " Sweeps from his lurking-hole the wily priest,
 " Creeds, that degrade the human to the beast ;
 " Bids, while sage Godwin's lessons to decry
 " Men, slaves of custom, obstinately *die*,
 " Bids welcome Truth the closing eyelid steep
 " In tranquil dews of never ending sleep ;
 " Bids Reason bow the Nations to her nod,
 " Throned in the seat of an exploded God.
 " Scorn of regenerate Man, shall bards alone
 " The call of Sense and Liberty disown ?
 " Writ'st thou for praise, for pleasure, or for pay,
 " Hail Innovation's beatific sway ;
 " Bask in the glare of her unclouded beams,
 " And quaff delirious rapture from her streams."
 Thanks for thy counsel, be it worst or best.
 Critic, the school that form'd thee is confest ;

And

And well thy dogmas with that school accord ;
 No school of Nature, nor of Nature's Lord !
 Yet many a claimant of poetic bays,
 Child of that school, in these enlighten'd days,
 Crafty in years, or ignorant in youth,
 Contemns the path of Nature and of Truth ;
 Prepared the luckless reader to beguile
 By alter'd principles and alter'd style.
 And though fleet Giffard * his indignant thong
 Cracks, as he drives the motley troop along :
 Though (train'd to nobler prey) yon archer band
 Take in the public track † their humble stand,
 Rouse with the opening dawn the noxious game,
 And rear by weekly toil perennial fame :
 Though he ‡, by all explored, to all unknown,
 Who tears all vizors while he guards his own,
 With shouts from twenty throats the foe alarms,
 And wields alike antique and modern arms :
 Lo, still new tribes the eternal war provoke,
 And rise like Lerna's heads beneath the Victor's stroke.

* Author of the Baviad and Mœviad.

† The Authors of the poetry in the Anti-Jacobin newspaper.

‡ The Author of the Pursuits of Literature.

So, when the barn devouring rats invade,
 Arm'd with the vengeful weapons of his trade,
 The Foe of vermin walks his annual round;
 Traps, dogs, and ferrets clear the haunted ground:
 Swarming ere long another brood appears,
 And gnaws the plenty of succeeding years.

Yes, bards can innovate. Full many a wight,
 Pen, paper, inkstand, all prepared to write,
 Hears, as it seems, a sage adviser say;

" Wou'dst thou, when scarce the efforts of a day

" Squeeze from thy brain ten little drops of sense,

" With lavish hand the modicum dispense?

" Husband thy treasure; spread it broad and thin:

" Let gloss without hide emptiness within.

" Art thou exhausted? Mark thy neighbour's store:

" Let scatter'd fragments of productive ore,

" Drawn from a plunder'd predecessor's mine,

" Amid thy dross with tarnish'd lustre shine.

" Let fleekest mantles of euphonic art

" To meagre sentiment a grace impart.

" Hot-press'd, wire-woven, let thy snowy page

" With Bulmer's type the vacant mind engage:

" Or

" Or if the mind the weak attempt defy,
 " Still win the ear, still captivate the eye."
 From line to line the flickering splendors run,
 As varnish'd tea-boards glitter in the sun.
 See garish ornament, with painted face,
 No more content to hold the second place,
 In gay confusion human and divine,
 False, true, old, modern, present, past combine;
 O'er allegoric hyperbolic verse
 Trope after trope, an endless shower, disperse;
 Huge families from page to page unroll,
 And form the texture of the flimsy whole.
 So, classic rills where Tiber's fountains pour,
 Some self-exalted Claudio of the hour,
 Of brilliance prating, toils to deck more bright
 His pictures gaudy with excess of light.
 From side to side a tinsel lustre plays;
 Sky, rock, hill, water, wood, renew the blaze:
 Again the artist scans the landscape round;
 Travels with gilding touch from ground to ground:
 And when at length, survey'd at distance due,
 The work, now deem'd complete, enchants his view,

A sober

A sober corner spies, the brush resumes,
 Another and another speck illumines;
 Nor lets one solitary spot disclose
 The simple charm of shadow and repose.

From style subdued, to bolder flights the bard
 Adventurous turns, nor finds the adventure hard.
 From vulgar shackles freed, his liberal strain
 Bids us the links of prejudice disdain:
 And, as from prose, no less we learn from song
 The glorious truth, "Whatever is, is wrong."
 The firm established, all arrangements made,
 Well form'd, well freighted, for their novel trade,
 Poetic merchantmen to every gale
 In Folly's service hoist the ready sail.
 Their barks by inland navigation glide
 To every creek of her domestic tide;
 Glean from each county with discernment nice
 For every palate an appropriate vice:
 Then by each town and village anchor cast,
 And feed their thousands with the rich repast.
 Next with full canvas from their native strand
 The helm they ply to many a foreign land;

To

To marts remote in quest of mischief roam,
 And bear with joy the precious cargo home.
 Their barks import, to mend our slavish laws,
Fraternal maxims, philosophic saws,
 That teach how blest, Equality, thy sway :
 How blest, where all command and none obey !
 Their barks import the sceptic note absurd,
 The shallow cavil at the Sacred Word,
 The gibe, the blundering scoff, that, here devised,
 Then 'cross the Channel sent, at home despised,
 A Briton's fancy yet may chance to hit,
 New-cloth'd, and trimmed with lace of Gallic wit.
 Their barks import, to renovate the age,
 New Codes of Morals from the German stage.
 Thence Guilt arrives in gorgeous robes array'd ;
 Till, at the glare while modest virtues fade,
 By Etna's light as stars and planets faint,
 We rank a *Robber** higher than a Saint.
 Thence too we learn how, shipwreck'd in Pellew,
 A Husband, hamper'd by conjunctures new,

* In allusion to a well known Drama, by Schiller.

Lord of two wives, this wedded in the isle,
 That disembarking from his native foil,
 By each assailed, to give up either loth,
 Concludes in partnership to keep them both* :
 How with accordant sway the charmers reign,
 And bring the patriarchal days again.

When damps mephitic to the darken'd skies
 In wide-extended effervescence rise ;
 We cannot wonder the poetic tribe
 A portion of the floating gas imbibe.
 When tongues, that cry to all the human race,
 Shake universal Nature on her base ;
 No^t wonder nerves, to every passing tone
 Keenly alive, the general impulse own.
 And well that Siren tongue may lull the ear,
 The heart expand, the ardent bosom cheer,
 That tells of Slaves to liberty restored ;
 Of ploughshares temper'd from the useless sword ;
 Of equal laws that bind and bless the whole,
 And ties fraternal linking pole to pole.

* In allusion to a recent Drama, by Kotzebue.

But

But first the deeds of Innovation prove :
 Try by her fruits her title to our love.
 And though we grant in many a distant land
 Augean stables ask her cleansing hand ;
 Though on our public pile a spot or stain
 Of human imperfection yet remain ;
 Say, shall our country's welfare meet its doom
 Beneath the twigs of her relentless broom ?
 But let her come ; and, as she wins her way,
 The wonted trophies of her might display :
 High o'er the frantic crowd in triumph swing
 The gory visage of a murder'd king ;
 From thronged scaffolds toss the patriot's head ;
 Banish the Senator, or smite him dead ;
 Hear, as she stalks, deluded nations groan,
Equal in guilt and misery alone :
 Then at the house of God direct her ire,
 Shake the tall pillar, cleave the nodding spire ;
 Melt the huge bell to cannon, and for balls
 Strip coffin'd reliques of their leaden walls ;
 Sell the bare pile a theatre to raise,
 Or bid it for her Guards a kitchen blaze ;

Or, as the Saviour's birthplace to deride,
 Stable her war-horse at the altar's side:
 Unbar the floodgates of licentious rage,
 Bid the wild torrent spare nor sex nor age;
 Till, as to every wind the streams divide,
 Law, Custom, Order, sink beneath the tide:
 And if some bolder spirits nobly strive
 To save some sparks of antient worth alive;
 As seamen, rolling in the briny grave,
 At times emerge and struggle with the wave;
 Pour down her cataracts with deepening roar,
 Till the red deluge swims from shore to shore!

But Peace and Plenty mark her equal reign;
 And bliss peculiar crowns the village train!
 Consult yon hind—Did claims of rent expire,
 When *Citizen* assumed the place of 'Squire?
 Gains he another field, now Lords are flown?
 Pays he less impost, now the tithes are gone?
 Beholds that cottager new pleasures wait,
 And sue for entrance at his humble gate?
 Discerns he none? Then may he boast the old
 Still undiminish'd in this Age of gold;

Beneath

Beneath his lowly roof in peace repose,
 And take in safety what his God bestows ;
 Survey at ease his garden's vernal pride,
 The scythe athwart his loaded meadow guide,
 From Autumn's wealth the pendent bough relieve,
 With crackling faggots cheer the winter eve ?
 The sun is set : the daily task is o'er :—
 Lo, military ruffians burst the door ;
 With savage eye the sons, the father, scan,
 Stern REQUISITION scowling in the van.
 May one escape ? The knell of all is rung :
 " Nor this," she cries, " too old, nor that too young :"
 Then sends the pinion'd slaves the sword to wield,
 And fight *for Freedom* in a distant field.

" Dreamer !" I hear the critic voice reply :
 " What, with our grandfathers did Wisdom die ?
 " Shall Man to torpid sloth inglorious bend,
 " Nor step by step Perfection's height ascend ?
 " Shall a vain sound, by interested fear
 " Rung like a 'larum in the public ear,
 " Watchword of Folly, Ignorance, and Pride,
 " For ever check Improvement's rolling tide ?

" Art

" Art thou of change, because 'tis change, the foe ?

" Friend of all wrong, because establish'd ?"—No.

When Innovation with impartial scales

Decides that evil over good prevails ;

By righteous means promotes a righteous plan ;

To God gives glory, happiness to man :

To prosperous gales be all her wings unfurl'd ;

Swift be their flight, and may they shade the world !

'Then, whether laws unjust or undefined

Sons of one state with links unequal bind ;

When Ignorance, that leans on tyrant Might,

Seals the barr'd entrance, and excludes the light ;

Through Superstition's fog with alter'd mien

And giant port when Heavenly Truth is seen :

Then may all Lands that fraud and force enthrall

Hear Innovation's spirit-stirring call ;

And as it hears may every region smile

As free and happy, Britain, as thine isle :

Or, that too little, smile, if more may be,

Than Britain's isle more happy and more free !

But when, regardless of what millions feel,

She sports at random with a nation's weal ;

Becomes

Becomes to Selfishness a willing tool,
 Plucks down one chief to bid a rival rule ;
 Pretends a blessing, and bequeaths a curse ;
 The good to bad transforms, the bad to worse ;
 Turns to an iron curb a teasing rein,
 Removes a cord, and fastens on a chain ;
 All Faith disclaims as antiquated lies,
 Abjures the Eternal Monarch of the skies ;
 Views bleeding Nature shrink beneath her rod,
 Alike the foe of Freedom and of God :
 O soon may He, who shakes this tottering ball,
 His vengeful Minister of wrath recall ;
 Some milder scourge bid guilty nations feel,
 And bright with beams of love his pitying face reveal !

THE END.



